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Express-News: Military

Army hopes to boost Hispanic ranks with test

By Sig Christenson

Express-News Military writer

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In an unprecedented attempt to increase the number of Hispanics in uniform, the Army early next year will begin giving Spanish-language tests to recruit applicants in San Antonio and other parts of the nation.

The 400 recruits chosen for the Foreign Language Recruiting Initiative will study English for up to seven months at the Defense Language Institute at Lackland AFB. They will then take a standard entrance exam in English, and those who pass will go on to basic training.

Army spokesman Paul Boyce acknowledged the two-year pilot program will have a modest start, but if successful, it could be offered nationwide. The service typically recruits more than 75,000 active-duty soldiers and 30,000 Army Reserve soldiers each year.

"We want the Army to remain the military service of choice for all Americans — to include today's expanding numbers of Hispanic youth," he said.

Like such relatively new programs as GED-Plus, which encourages young people to earn General Education Development certificates and join the Army, the language recruiting initiative that will start in January is designed to draw a larger share of America's growing Hispanic population into uniform.

Hispanics make up 8.5 percent of all soldiers, and represent 12 percent of the nation's population.

The Army believes some Hispanics failing the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, the test used to evaluate all recruits seeking to enter the military, could pass it if they better comprehended English — particularly those hailing from such places as Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico, which also boasts the No. 1 recruiting company in the Army.

To identify potential soldiers, recruiters in Puerto Rico, San Antonio and Los Angeles will give some applicants a Spanish-language version of a standard personnel exam used to measure cognitive ability. The test covers

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reading comprehension, vocabulary and math.

"If you look at our attempts to penetrate and expand the Hispanic market, there are obvious barriers that are readily present," said Douglas Smith, a spokesman with the Army Recruiting Command in Fort Knox, Ky., citing high dropout rates as one impediment. "Language is one of them."

Some Hispanics' high school dropout rate is another barrier, he said.

Though details haven't been worked out, those scoring in the top 50 percent of the Spanish test will be sent to Lackland's Defense Language Institute (DLI), where they will earn \$964.80 a month, the standard pay for a recruit in basic training.

After as long as seven months at Lackland, they'll have to pass a DLI English comprehension test, which includes written and oral examinations. The recruits must then clear the final hurdle by passing the aptitude battery, which is given in English.

Anyone failing the battery, known by its acronym ASVAB, will receive an "uncharacterized" discharge, which is neither honorable nor dishonorable and won't taint a person's history with future employers.

They will not be required to repay the government for their language training, said Naomi Verdugo, an Army specialist on recruiting and education issues.

Just what the language recruiting initiative would cost over its two-year cycle is not yet clear, but it is a dramatic departure from past efforts to boost Hispanic recruiting.

For years, the Army has sent 550 to 600 recruits, most of them Hispanic and from Puerto Rico, to the DLI, which opened in 1954 and graduates 2,500 military or government students a year from 70 allied countries. The school teaches English to those unfamiliar with the language, and offers specialized courses in such areas as engineering and aviation terminology.

The language recruiting initiative's emphasis on screening recruits and then funneling them into the DLI's English instruction pipeline is a departure for the Army, one that observers say will get attention.

"It'll raise eyebrows," predicted Michael O'Hanlon, an analyst at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington, D.C. "People will say if they can't speak English, do you really want them fighting in American combat units? You have to watch this kind of a policy very carefully."

Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-San Antonio, applauded the Army's efforts to reach out to the Hispanic community.

"Hispanics have been underrepresented in the Army's ranks, and I've been encouraging the Army for the past three years to think outside the box in its Hispanic recruiting efforts," said Rodriguez, a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

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Variations of the same Spanish outreach theme have appeared in the past, only to eventually fizzle. None, however, has been so broad in scope or such an investment in recruiting Hispanic soldiers.

The Foreign Language Recruiting Initiative marks the first formal Army program in which recruits are tested in Spanish and then sent to a Defense Department language school to learn English, Boyce said.

But in 1953, the Army began to give the Examen Calificación de Fuerzas Armadas, or ECFA, to recruits in Puerto Rico as a screening test. It was discontinued in the early 1970s when the Army shifted to an all-volunteer force.

The Navy developed a Spanish-language test for enlistment during the early 1980s. That exam was administered to only 205 Navy applicants as part of a study.

The concept of a new Spanish initiative picked up steam two years ago as the Army, like the Air Force and Navy, failed to sign up enough new recruits to meet its needs. Groups, established by then-Army Secretary Louis Caldera, studied everything from recruiting-station locations to ways of reaching out to key demographic groups.

"We know that Hispanic American youth have the highest interest in military service, low attrition and high retention, and that they're underrepresented and a growing part of the population," Caldera said. "So those are the reasons why you say we want more of these kinds of soldiers in the military."

The first-term attrition rate for Hispanic soldiers is 24.8 percent, compared with 32 percent attrition for the Army as a whole.

Though Boyce could offer no statistics, he and others said Hispanic propensity to join the Army is the highest of any ethnic group.

In the past quarter-century Hispanic males have been more likely than Anglo men to say they wanted to serve in the Army, confirmed David Segal, a University of Maryland sociology professor. But Hispanics are not enlisting as often as expected because of language barriers and increased high school dropout rates, he said, citing a University of Michigan study.

One of every three male Hispanic high school seniors surveyed in 1976 said they would definitely or probably enlist in the military, while one in five white men said they'd sign up. Fewer whites, Hispanics and blacks said they would enlist in 1997, but Hispanics still showed the most interest in the military of any group, with one of every four indicating they would join.

Until the 1990s, blacks were most likely to list the military as a prime option after high school, with half saying they would enlist.

"I think in terms of making the recruiting numbers and meeting their end-

<http://news.mysanantonio.com/story.cfm?xla=saen&xlb=340&xlc=398336&xld=180>

strength goals, it is very smart," said Segal, who ran the Army's sociological research program from 1973-75.

The Pentagon's Verdugo said there are no plans to provide any materials in Spanish for the soldiers in the language recruiting initiative who reach basic training. They'll be expected to master English well enough to perform after graduating from Lackland's language institute, she said.

Retired Army Col. David Hackworth, a syndicated columnist, decried the initiative as another in a series of costly ploys to boost recruiting. He also worried that it could complicate critical contact on the battlefield.

"If you can't communicate, you're in big trouble, especially in warfare," he said.

But pointing to studies that show Hispanics will become the nation's largest minority by 2006, Smith wondered:

"How can you not make the concessions for that target market? You're going to have to."

"I think it's a win-win," said Caldera, now a vice chancellor with California State University in Long Beach. "If you've got motivated recruits who have every ability to be successful but for the English-language skills, reaching out to them and helping them develop those skills is helpful on many fronts."

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USS COLE: ONE YEAR LATER

Families' trust was a victim, too

3 Texas sailors were
among the dead on
American destroyer.

BY SIG CHRISTENSON
EXPRESS-NEWS MILITARY WRITER

It's been one year since a terror blast left a huge hole in the destroyer USS Cole and in the lives of 17 families who lost children there.

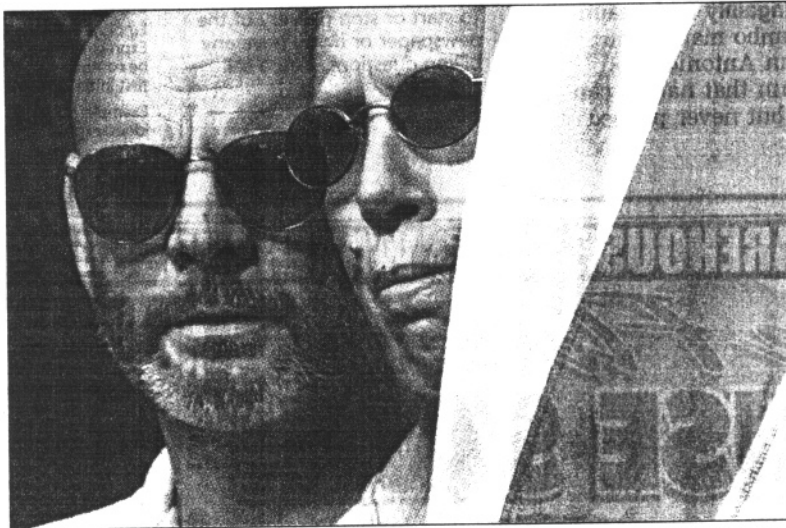
The Cole has been patched up, but the same can't be said for the families of three Texans who died on the destroyer.

With only the memories of their children left to cling to, the parents of Gary Graham Swenchonis Jr., Ronchester Santiago and Timothy Lee Gauna have endured the past year.

One has lost some of his faith in God. Others wonder if justice exists. All distrust the U.S. government.

"The main thing I feel that I've lost, and my wife lost as well, is faith in government and any trust in government at all," said Gary Graham Swenchonis Sr., 46, of Rockport. "When I say our government, I mean our leaders."

A profound alienation has developed among Swenchonis and many other relatives of the sailors lost



BILLY CALZADA/STAFF

Gary and Deb Swenchonis, parents of Navy fireman Gary Graham Swenchonis Jr., remember him one year after he died aboard the USS Cole.

when terrorists set off a blast that nearly sank the Cole one year ago Friday. They're skeptical of American resolve in finding those responsible, and they feel spurned by government leaders.

"We got a lot of speeches — rah-rah speeches — 'They'll have no safe harbor and there will be no place to hide and you will be brought to justice,'" said Anton Gunn, whose brother, Cherone Louis Gunn, 22, died in the blast.

"We got no action, we got no follow-up; I mean, there's nothing. We've got nothing."

Rather than attend a ceremony Friday in Norfolk, Va., marking the anniversary and the dedication of a monument honoring the dead, Swenchonis, his wife, Deb, and daughter, Shalala Woods, instead visited their son's grave at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

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BOB OWEN/STAFF

Shalala Swenchonis, sister of USS Cole fireman Gary Swenchonis Jr., visits his grave Friday at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Crew's kin mark first anniversary

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Deb Swenchonis used scissors to cut the stems of several red roses before kneeling to put them into a vase and place it next to her son's white marble headstone.

As the trio stood in silence, rifle fire from the cemetery's Memorial Service Detachment erupted nearby.

"I thought it was really ironic," Gary Swenchonis Sr. said. "Another volley on Oct. 12 for Gary."

More than 1,000 people, meanwhile, gathered in Norfolk for a half-hour ceremony broadcast nationwide. The families of three Cole victims did not attend, the Navy said.

While Rogelio Santiago Sr. and his wife, Simeona, left their Kingsville home to join Gunn and his family at the Norfolk event, Sarah Gauna kept her normal routine of the past year — visiting her son's grave three times over the course of the day.

The Norfolk ceremony "is more show for the Navy, more politics," she said.

"Why should I go?" asked 39-year-old Gauna, from a small community near Dallas. "It's not going to bring Tim back."

Swenchonis, 26, of Rockport; Santiago, 22, of Kingsville; and Gauna, 21, of the North Texas town of Ennis perished when a bomb blew a 40-by-40-foot hole in the Cole's hull while the ship refueled in Aden, Yemen.

The attack sparked dual probes by Yemeni and FBI investigators, but the inquiries have yet to result in trials or a U.S. counterstrike.

Exiled Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden is thought to have been involved in the bombing but hasn't claimed responsibility.

Past and present government officials have assured the families they're still seeking the attackers. Still, they choose their words carefully, not wanting to promise more than they can deliver.

"I can give them a sense that the FBI has never stopped their efforts in investigating this crime, this attack," said the Pentagon's Rear Adm. Craig Quigley. "But I can never promise, and neither can the FBI, what they're going to find."

Washington has "an obligation to the families to say that we will seek justice," former Defense Secretary William Cohen said. "We can arrest them and prosecute them — that's one thing — and track them down and eliminate them. That, too, will be a form of justice."

Meanwhile, the families fight daily to keep their children's memories alive.

Outside the Swenchonises' home north of Rockport, three flagpoles stand surrounded by rocks and red, white and blue flowers.

The flags are those of the Army and Navy — the two military branches Gary Jr. served in — and the U.S. flag that covered his casket.

An hour or so to the southwest, in Kingsville, the Santiagos have taken inventory of the things the Navy sent back from the Cole — his boots, uniforms and souvenirs.

Far from South Texas in Rice, a community off Interstate 45 just south of Dallas, Gauna keeps her son's clothes, Navy books and poems in two cedar chests that sit on each side of her bed. Timothy's blue USS Cole cap and two teddy bears also are within

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***"It's a political game
and 17 sailors died
because of politics."***

RETIRED NAVY CHIEF LOU GUNN
father of Cole victim

arm's reach.

A cherished Mother's Day poem he published in the Ennis Daily News during the mid-1990s rests atop one of the chests.

"My mother has done the best she could to raise me and I wouldn't change nothing in the world because I love her," he wrote.

Tim graduated from Ennis High School in 1997 and joined the Navy two years later, serving as an information systems technician on the Cole. He hoped to study accounting at the University of Texas and later rejoin the Navy as an officer.

Ronchester Santiago, too, had his eyes on the University of Texas, where he wanted to study engineering. As a young boy, he often tinkered with electronic toys.

"Some of his friends called him the little MacGyver," said his father, Rogelio Santiago, referring to the TV character who always found innovative ways to get out of jams.

Gary Jr. apparently had found his calling in the Navy, where he served as a fireman aboard the Cole. Before, he graduated from Rockport-Fulton High School in 1994 and served four years in the Army.

After his death, his parents sold their house in town and turned to the isolation of a wooded area. But unanswerable questions have haunted them.

Those issues were magnified when suicide bombers killed thousands last month in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"I wonder if (U.S. officials) lay in bed at night and think about all those innocent people who died because of their lack of action, because they were trying to satisfy Middle East politics," Gary Swenchonis Sr. said.

"It's a political game and 17 sailors died because of politics," retired Navy chief Lou Gunn, 51, of Virginia Beach, Va., commented in lamenting the death of his son.

At 56, the elder Santiago spends most of his time at home looking at pictures of his son and pondering fate.

"I have second thoughts (about God's existence)," said Santiago, a retired Navy chief raised as a Catholic. "I've got a lot of things to say about that, but to make it short, I lost some of my faith (in) God, I (lost) some of my trust in our decision-makers in the country."

Like the elder Santiago, Gauna feels guilt over not having been able to protect her son. Over the last year, she's turned inward, visiting her son's grave — her refuge when the world closes in.

"That's my way of healing," Gauna said. "I get this knot in my stomach, I have to go visit him and start crying and screaming, or whatever anger I have in my stomach."

"It's like a knot you get in there and you feel like it's going to come up your throat and you're going to either get mad or you're going to hurt somebody, but I don't. I go out there with nobody out there to bother me and I start screaming and crying."

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Anthrax scare affects S.A. agencies, workplaces

By CINDY TUMIEL
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

San Antonio grew a bit more tense Friday as residents and businesses absorbed news about a new anthrax case in New York and government officials sent conflicting messages about staying alert and staying calm.

On one hand, public officials from Washington to San Antonio urged residents to go about their business, despite FBI warnings of possible new terror attacks soon.

But at the same time, television sets erupted into a blitz of news conferences about an NBC News employee with skin anthrax, and postal officials told people to be wary of odd-looking or unexpected packages.

One San Antonio business ordered its mailroom employees to wear disposable masks and gloves when sorting company mail.

City officials announced that a mail hoax at city offices this week involved powdered coffee creamer, not anthrax. Still, they implemented new mail security measures.

Hospitals, doctors and health departments have been fielding more calls about anthrax and bioterrorism, and seeing worried patients.

"It's hard to tell people, 'Don't worry,'" said Doug McBride, spokesman for the Texas Department of Health in Austin. "There's no magic bubble people can buy to surround and protect themselves."

Postal officials urge wariness of suspicious and unexpected mail after the discovery of the New York anthrax case, which could have been transmitted by mail. The FBI has launched a criminal investigation.

In San Antonio, postal inspector Douglas Turner noted there never has been a confirmed case of a biological agent such as anthrax being sent through the U.S. mail.

He advised anyone who gets a suspicious package, "If you've already got it in your hands, put it in a plastic bag or somehow isolate it."

On Friday, Southwest Business Corp. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Charlie Amato made a call to his mailroom in San Antonio.

"I just instructed them to go buy boxes of disposable gloves and wear masks and use them until I tell them to stop," Amato said. "I'm kind of paranoid right now."

City Manager Terry Brechtel said preliminary reports on the white powder discovered in city offices Wednesday with an envelope containing a picture of Islamic extremist Osama bin Laden has been tentatively identified as "coffee creamer or something of that nature."

Fifteen city employees were decontaminated after the substance was found on the fifth floor of the city's Municipal Plaza Building.

Despite the hoax, the city has revised its mail handling, spokeswoman Bertha Lopez said.

"We are working with the U.S. Postal Service to provide training for employees (on how to handle suspicious mail), but I'm not at liberty to disclose what security measures will take place," Lopez said.

Hospital emergency rooms and doctors' offices have seen some patients worried about anthrax, and fielded many phone calls.

Dr. Fernando Guerra, director of the Metropolitan Health District, said he had heard from worried teachers, nurses, business owners and parents about symptoms they see.

"It's probably nothing more than seasonal allergies, but with the heightened awareness, people certainly are going to pursue getting more information," Guerra said.

Dr. Ronald Stewart, trauma di-

rector at University Hospital, said people should do what they normally do about illnesses.

"My message is I would be prudent and use the normal criteria I would use to seek medical care," Stewart said. "If you are sick enough that you would normally see a doctor, go see a doctor."

Officials from the Metropolitan Health District, the Bexar County Medical Society and the University of Texas Health Science Center plan a community seminar on bioterrorism for Oct. 22.

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Staff Writers Sonja Garza, Travis Poling, Melissa Monroe and William Pack contributed to this report.



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Anthrax in the mail

What should I do if I receive an anthrax threat by mail?

- Do not handle the mail piece or package suspected of contamination.
- Notify the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, local police, safety office or designated person.
- Make sure that damaged or suspicious packages are isolated and the immediate area cordoned off.
- Ensure that all persons who have touched the mail piece wash their hands with soap and water.
- The inspectors will collect the mail, assess the threat situation and coordinate with the FBI.
- Designated officials will notify local, county and state health departments.
- Designated officials will notify the state emergency manager.
- List all persons who have touched the letter and/or envelope. Include contact information. Provide the list to the Inspection Service.
- As soon as practical, shower with soap and water. Change clothes.
- Place all items worn when in contact with the suspected mail piece in plastic bags and keep them wherever you change your clothes and have them available for law enforcement agents.

■ If prescribed medication by medical personnel, take it until otherwise instructed or it runs out.

■ Contact the Center for Disease Control Emergency Response at (770) 488-7100 for answers to any questions.

What constitutes a 'suspicious parcel?'

Some typical characteristics postal inspectors have detected over the years, which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you, are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- Have no return address, or have one that can't be verified as legitimate, are of unusual weight given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as 'Personal' or 'Confidential.'
- Have protruding wires, strange odors or stains.
- Show a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address.



HARRY THOMAS/STAFF

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Military veterans lend expertise to networks — at a price

By HOWARD KURTZ
WASHINGTON POST

They have stormed the airwaves, these veterans of combat past, serving as televised tour guides to the war against Afghanistan.

Norman Schwarzkopf, the Persian Gulf War commander, on NBC. Barry McCaffrey, the retired general and former drug czar, on NBC. William Cohen, Bill Clinton's Pentagon chief, on CBS. Wesley Clark, who led NATO forces in Kosovo, on CNN. They are part of a small battalion of sound-bite-savvy military men, most of whom have signed exclusive deals with the networks.

"My role is to translate military stuff into something people can understand," says retired Air Force Gen. Charles Horner, a consultant to ABC. "It's kind of like John Madden, explaining why the guy went left and cut toward the goal posts."

"Fox likes to use me because I put it in layman's terms, rather than using the acronyms that confuse people," says retired Army Maj. Gen. Paul Vallely, who works for Fox News.

"If I can get four or five minutes on TV, I can actually get two or three useful points out," says retired Air Force Maj. Gen. Perry Smith, who does commentary for NBC and CBS Radio. He shapes the discussion during "pre-interview" sessions: "If you set up pretty good questions, you can get out pretty good information."

They are the media's version of the National Guard, but almost all are men. One exception is Claudia Kennedy, who retired as an Army lieutenant general last year after accusing another general of sexual harassment; she now consults for NBC.

The military pundits who explain the difference between B-1s and B-52s, or between Stingers and Tomahawks, fill a gaping void for the networks, since Bush administration officials are rarely available except in a parade of news conferences.

The bookers are also turning to a cadre of national-security experts, terrorism experts, Middle East experts, war-hero senators (John McCain, Bob Kerrey) and all-around wise men (Richard Holbrooke, James Baker, Henry Kissinger).

The former military officers, naturally, aren't volunteering for free. "If you are asking someone to be on 24-hour standby, it is only fair to compen-

"My role is to translate military stuff into something people can understand. It's kind of like John Madden, explaining why the guy went left and cut toward the goal posts."

RETIRE AIR FORCE GEN. CHARLES HORNER
consultant to ABC

sate them for their time," says ABC spokesman Jeffrey Schneider. "All the news divisions have exclusive deals with their experts because in the heat of breaking events, you need to know that your expert is available to your broadcast at a moment's notice."

Which doesn't always work out. When the U.S. airstrikes began Sunday, CBS scrambled to find Cohen, who was traveling to Phoenix for a speech (the network had passed him up for "Face the Nation" because he'd been on the two previous Sundays). The former defense secretary didn't get on the air until Monday morning.

Competition can be fierce. CNN snared Wesley Clark but failed to lure back Perry Smith, who quit over the network's handling of its 1998 "Tailwind" story — later retracted — which accused U.S. troops of having used nerve gas in the Vietnam War. But CNN's "Lou Dobbs Moneyline" signed Cohen.

McCaffrey, a key Gulf War commander, says a major reason he signed with NBC is that "Tom Brokaw is one of my favorite people in America." He says he notified the network that "my views would be tempered by the fact that my son is operating out of one of our elite parachute brigades."

The West Point professor says he's at ease in front of the camera because he's done 3,000 TV interviews in the last five years. (An added plus: He monitored illegal drug trafficking in Afghanistan during the Clinton administration.) But part of McCaffrey's role has been behind the scenes, giving NBC, MSNBC and CNBC "technical advice on how to explain things with maps and graphics and digital-terrain features," and advising a news director "where he might position assets to capture the action as it evolves."

Though some former officials have been out of action for a decade or more, they have plenty of battle scars. Smith flew 180 combat missions in Vietnam, and his war experience stretches back even further: At age 6 in Honolulu, he

saw the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor while heading to Sunday school.

While some of the ex-brass shy away from offering their opinions, Smith says he tries "to offset the gloom-and-doom mentality that seems to pervade the media in every war." The campaign in Afghanistan, he says, "is not going to last very long and we're going to win decisively."

The military experts say they are careful about not revealing classified information they've gleaned in the past — not a problem facing garden-variety commentators. "I'm not a reporter," says Clark, who retains his security clearance. "I'm not going to use my relationships from a previous profession with good, close personal friends to try to elicit information. I don't want to know things about future operations. I don't want to cross that line."

Their approach is shaped in part by their own experience with the press when they were in uniform. Not everyone had a favorable impression.

"A lot of media don't understand the military," Vallely says. "If you haven't served, you don't understand why things are done the way they are."

"Often they will be slanted and they tend to be liberal in their views," Horner says. "But they're there to report the truth."

But McCaffrey says journalists "are almost invariably incredibly intelligent, hard-working and in many cases know more about the issue than you do."

Clark, for his part, is sometimes amused by the way he is interviewed:

"In order to keep the format entertaining and informative, they like the dialogue approach. They ask questions when they probably could have given some of the answers themselves."



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Computer terrorists could hack away at the U.S.

Experts see
a serious threat
to the nation

By ROY BRAGG
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

It could be a 20-state power surge that short-circuits millions of security, communication and safety systems.

Railroads could be routed onto the wrong tracks, causing collisions and toxic spills.

Gas pipeline safety systems could be vandalized to cause explosions.

The next terror attack may not come from the sky, or from tainted mail, but rather over copper wire and fiber-optic cable.

Security experts say a well-financed team of hackers, with enough time and backed by a rogue nation's money, could wage war on America armed only with digital tools.

Cyberterrorism is more than defaced Web sites or computer viruses. Computer-wielding vandals could disrupt financial systems and wreak havoc with the nation's infrastructure.

The scenarios aren't far-fetched. Hacking occurs daily. There have been repeated hacks into credit card, banking and company financial systems.

Last week, a hacker tried to extort \$45,000 from WebCertificate.com, a company that sells online gift certificates.

The hacker had obtained names, addresses and e-mail accounts of the company's 1 million customers. The company refused to pay.

On a more ominous level, hackers last spring got into the computer system of a California

power company. There was no damage, and that grid wasn't connected to the system.

"Quite a lot can be done well if you're doing it well," said Marc Enger, former operations director for the Air Intelligence Agency, the global center for Air Force intelligence. "We are susceptible. As our businesses build, they are building in the most successful means possible, not in the most secure means available."

"I wouldn't put it past the terrorists to have individuals who are trained, as part of their attacks against us, to open floodgates or close power grids or break into banks," said Rick Fleming, a security expert. "There's a great threat that our tech could be used against us."

The threat of cyber terror isn't a matter of punching a few keys on a whim, but instead a concerted effort that relies on old-fashioned techniques, too, say Fleming and Enger, who work at Digital Defense, a San Antonio-based information security firm.

Many security breaches, they say, are accomplished through "social engineering," a hacker term used to describe bribery, coercion, blackmail or simply duping a computer system's operators to get details such as passwords or the makeup of computer defenses.

"You'd need social engineering plus a heck of a lot of good intelligence work," Enger said. "You've got to know what you're going after and where to get the information. Find data, find targets, and keep going back to check on it as you're planning your attack."

"This isn't something you do overnight or on the spur of the moment."

But armed with the right information, dedicated hackers could take on the U.S. with a small army of laptops.

"Take power grids," Enger said. "There are some things you can do there. I don't want to get into specifics, because I don't want to give anyone any ideas. But a lot of the area you would look at involves remote administration."

That refers to computerized equipment, typically scattered over a large geographic area, that is controlled from a distant location, such as a centralized computer server or office.

"People (could break into a remote administration system) and reset things," he said. "If you can do that, you can definitely do some damage. If you can hack into systems and reset how much power voltage you let through before overrides happen, for example, you can cause damage that way."

Oil and gas pipelines could be tinkered with and their safety systems defeated, Enger said. Tampering with pipelines could result in ruptures, fires or shortages.

Railroad cars could be stolen by tampering with automatic systems that account for rolling stock, he said. Those railroad cars then could be used to deliver any manner of attacks.

Banking systems could be hacked, Fleming said, with money transfers accomplished without the knowledge of the financial institutions. Any such transaction could be canceled at a later date, but during the interim, the cash flow could destabilize important businesses.

"Could a group of hackers, with the right motivation and right info, get into U.S. banks?" Fleming asked. "Yes. They could."

Rather than attack a specific system, hackers go for the equivalent of a virtual home run, shutting down the Internet, crippling thousands of businesses that rely on e-commerce and electronic communication.

The Internet was envisioned as a decentralized communications system that can't be crippled, but Notre Dame researchers say attacks on a handful of electronic gathering points called nodes could bring the World Wide Web to its knees.

But while trained hackers could devastate the U.S. economy with dedicated computer work, terror suspect Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan's Taliban are almost hackproof.

"There's not a lot we can do there," Enger said. "There's like, what, one Internet connection to the outside in the country? There's not much to play with there. I mean, you can't even bomb them back to the Stone Age. They're already there. They're living in caves."

That hasn't stopped Kimble Schmitz, a German hacker, from trying.

Schmitz says he and his hacker posse have offered their help to U.S. law enforcement authorities.

In an unverified claim, Schmitz says his group already has located some of bin Laden's bank accounts and turned that information over to the FBI.

Schmitz, who served prison time for hacking before building a multimillion-dollar computer services company, also said he put a \$10 million bounty on bin Laden's head.

Fleming is skeptical of those claims.

"Obviously, the difficulty is finding out which accounts are his," he said.

"What do you do? Break into every bank in the world? Probably not."

The most that a hacker could do is rob a terrorist blind.

"I don't see how they would be able to do much more harm than the federal government could by freezing his accounts," Fleming said.

While bin Laden is safe from cyber attacks, the threat to America is real.

Law enforcement officials are aware of the nation's security holes, Enger said, but can't do much about it.

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FOCUS: PROTECTING THE MILITARY

Forget anything?

I was shocked by the news I read in the newspaper and saw on TV.

Information about a local intelligence operation, giving its location, building description, its security mission, an official's name, its importance to the military and its local financial impact were blabbed for all to read.

On TV and in the newspaper, we got full coverage on where and how military food is made.

This irresponsible reporting just provided important security information to any enemy living in San Antonio. If I didn't know better, I would think you were working for the terrorists. You have certainly done their homework for them.

Even as an artist, I have enough sense to keep my mouth shut about sensitive information, and I certainly expect journalists in a military city to have enough sense to not jeopardize our situation.

— Gene Elder

Hey, Osama, over here!

I was appalled at the Oct. 7 article in Metro "S.A. agency is hub for new battle: Air Force's spy data come together here."

Why doesn't the Express-News just rent a beacon, point it at the Air Intelligence Agency and say, "Bin Laden, send your guys here next?"

I am very much for freedom of the press. As a matter of fact, I was a journalism major. However, the press needs to print information on a "public needs to know" basis, not "the public could get killed if they know" basis.

Articles like this are better left in the file.

— Barbara Manhood

No need to know

In my 32 years of service to the Air Force as a civilian with a security clearance and some knowledge of the mission of "Security Hill," at no time did I need the information in the article "S.A. agency is hub for new battle."



LT. J.G. DOUGLAS E. HOUSER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A local reporter says the USS Enterprise and its crew, shown loading ordnance before the strikes last Sunday, were never put in danger by a TV broadcast.

Is the need to publish more important than keeping this information confidential? Are we not taking the terrorists seriously?

— Herb Blair

Loose lips not his

Re: the Oct. 3 letter "Loose lips still sink ships":

As a television journalist, I ask viewers to watch our product with a critical eye. However, letter writer Don Wyman's criticism is simply not backed up by the facts.

We recently aired a report on the fact that local men and women are now aboard the USS Enterprise, the world's largest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

We told our viewers that the Enterprise is currently "somewhere in the Northern Arabian Sea." We added that the ship must be "at least 12 miles offshore" because any closer would be protected waters of another nation.

In no way did we "pinpoint" where the

vessel is. We, like all readers and Mr. Wyman, are proud Americans, and we would never do anything to compromise the safety of our Navy ships.

— Paul Deanno,
meteorologist/reporter,
KENS-TV

Reads like treason

My husband was in the Army for more than 30 years. He served three tours in Korea and two in Vietnam.

The last thing I would have wanted was to read in the press where he was and what he was doing. The enemy seems to know soon enough.

I consider media coverage of the U.S. actions in Afghanistan treason, and any person (media, Congress or otherwise) who releases information should be tried as a traitor.

I feel I speak for all wives, mothers, sisters and sweethearts who have loved ones striving to protect their country.

— Patricia J. Wood



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Nation shortchanges its dedicated warriors

By JACKIE LEMKE

COMMENT

On Oct. 2, I found a local news report disturbing. It was the story of how the Spurs and others in the San Antonio were starting a fund to supplement the wages that reservists would lose because they were called to active duty.

Don't get me wrong: I am a strong believer in helping others in need. I find this disturbing because these individuals knew when they signed up with the Reserves and National Guard they could be called to serve their country.

Just as our active-duty personnel do, they should have been making provisions in case this happened. These individuals want the incentives and benefits of being a reservist but don't want to suffer the consequences the enlisted endure every day. They will enjoy retirement benefits and privileges, but where is the justice for the active-duty members who serve this country every day?

More often than not, active-duty military are taken for granted until there is a crisis. This seems to be the only time many Americans think about how the military defends this country and the freedom we all value so much.

Where is the support for members of the armed forces whose basic pay is between \$1,142.80 and \$1,288.80 a month, with a housing allowance of \$568 to \$606? This is equal to \$9.87 to \$10.93 an hour if the individual works a 40-hour week (most people in the military work more than that).

Many of the lower enlisted members would be considered

low-income and qualify for financial aid, but most are too proud and will not apply.

And that does not even take into consideration when the military person has an unaccompanied tour and is away from his or her family for a year or more. That family now incurs the added burdens of loneliness and stress that accompany the separation.

When the tour is done, the active duty member prays his family has been able to withstand the separation. The divorce rate for the military was astronomical after Desert Storm, and this makes me wonder what it will be like after this confrontation.

Congress needs to take a look at what the military is being paid and get them in line with the real world. Then maybe we wouldn't have to hold fund-raisers to supplement the pay of reservists.

I would like to see Congress members try to make ends meet on the meager wages the U.S. military forces receive. If you really want to do something to help the military, write your senator and congressman and get them to take the action necessary to give the armed forces wages comparable to the national average.

I realize military life is not for everyone. It takes a special individual, but most of the military are proud to serve God and their country and to give their lives for the freedom we enjoy here in America.

Jackie Lemke lives in San Antonio.



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War and money

Military families on alert are urged to review their financial affairs.

By AISSATOU SIDIMÉ
EXPRESS-NEWS BUSINESS WRITER

Watching images of burning buildings on Sept. 11, Sylvia Esparza had a flashback. It was 1991 and just a day after learning she was pregnant with their second child that her husband, Air Force Reserve Master Sgt. John Esparza, told her he was being sent to Saudi Arabia in Operation Desert Storm.

His six-month absence sent the Esparza household into a financial crisis.

"I didn't know what to do," recalls Sylvia, now 35. "He was the one who would take care of everything."

Unfamiliar with paying bills, she missed some payment dates and incurred penalties.

Sylvia racked up overseas phone calls trying to find out from John how to handle the cash crunch.

So on Sept. 11, the Esparzas began reviewing their finances.

Across the nation, guardsmen, reservists

and active duty military personnel are on alert waiting to hear if they will be deployed to serve in the nation's anti-terrorism campaign.

Financial planners and military officers urge military families to use this time to review their finances. Among their recommendations:

- Consolidate documents on savings, investments and bank accounts; legal documents; and life, auto and medical insurance policies. Store them with other key items, such as payment stubs for bills and warranties for vehicles and household appliances or services.

- Update military records of beneficiaries; review life insurance and add new spouses or children to the military's Tricare health insurance plan and to a will.

- A power of attorney document is necessary for a spouse, family member or friend to handle real estate or vehicles, as well as the medical or educational needs of non-custodial children, and to access bank and investment accounts.

- Sign "Transfer on Death" and "Payment on Death" notices for investments and accounts to avoid some of the delays of probate court.

- Review financial skills if the nonmobilized spouse isn't the usual bookkeeper.

"During Desert Storm, some of these women could not write a check. I had to

teach them," said Mary Santini, former vice president of Family Support 90th Regional Support Command for the Army Reserve.

"It's oftentimes a tragedy when someone's divorced, then remarried, and dies, but never changed his ex-wife as beneficiary," said Lt. Col. Fred Taylor, deputy Staff Judge Advocate at Fort Sam Houston.

John Esparza, a reservist with the 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Lackland AFB, also recommends saving to cover any delay in pay.

His first paycheck on active duty during Desert Storm didn't arrive in the family checking account for almost two months. His wife didn't have enough money to pay the bills. She ultimately took out a loan and borrowed money from her parents.

"We learned from Desert Storm and started saving after that," he said. "Right now we have enough for three months of bills if we have to."

Ed Komandosky, spokesman for the Texas Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, echoed the warning.

"Once you're activated it's probably six to eight weeks before the first active duty paycheck," Komandosky said.

Active duty personnel can cut debt pay-

See GI FAMILIES/3E

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PLANNING NOW CAN AVERT PROBLEMS LATER



TOM REEL/STAFF

Sgt. John Esparza points out some combat items he used during the Gulf War to his son, John Esparza Jr. (left); to daughter, Michelle; and son, Michael, on the lap of his wife, Sylvia Esparza.



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GI families are urged to review finances

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ments by applying for relief with creditors under the 1940 Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. They must send a copy of the activation notice with a letter requesting reduction of interest to a lender.

The act requires lenders to reduce interest rates to no more than 6 percent. It prohibits evictions from rental property and foreclosure proceedings during and for three months after a tour of duty.

Randolph-Brooks Federal Credit Union will also reduce interest rates on some business loans.

Experts say it's a good idea to ask each lender whether the reduced interest rate applies to both existing and new debt incurred during the tour of duty.

The act allows renters to terminate leases without penalty.

Although not required, some employers will pay any difference between civilian and military pay. USAA and United Parcel Service Inc. announced they will pay the difference. Moreover, USAA will issue full civilian pay, on top of military pay, for the first four weeks of duty. JP MorganChase will continue full civilian pay, on top of military pay, throughout the tour of duty.

Some banks, such as Security Service Federal Credit Union, are offering pre-approved loans to cover any gap.

Employers are required by federal law to hold a position for military personnel up to five years, without loss of seniority, vacation or other benefits — including pay raises.

"Even if they are gone 18 months and during that time were due a pay raise, they are entitled to it when they get back and to full pension credit for the time they served," Komandosky said.

Employers must offer the option to buy health insurance for up to 18 months. Family members generally can receive free coverage from military facilities, but they may want to buy supplemental insurance to cover co-payments and other medical fees.

The Esparzas bought the extended medical policy from his employer "because of the comfort we had with our personal doctors," John Esparza said.

There also are ways to save money on insurance: If a second vehicle won't be driven as often or at all, contact insurers to drop collision and comprehensive coverage. That's usually about half the premium.

The state chapter of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve can help with work conflicts.

The group can be reached toll free at (800) 336-4590 or online at www.esgr.org.

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UNIMAGINABLE

Hard to fathom what city
would be like without base

Deserted.
Tumbleweeds.
That's how former Wichita Falls Mayor Charles Harper remembered Sheppard Air Force Base in 1948, when he and his basic training comrades arrived from Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. Newly named and seven years after the birth of Sheppard Air Field, the base consisted of "weather-beaten, two-story, wood military barracks," Harper wrote in the *Sheppard Anniversary Issue*, 10 years ago.

"We stacked our duffle bags under the only tree in sight."

A ghost town compared to what Sheppard Air Force has become — home to the 82nd Training Wing and the 80th Flying Training Wing and host to the 13 nations of the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Point Training Program.

A ghost town — that's what Wichita Falls would surely resemble without Sheppard Air Force Base. The base, which provides training in medical service, aircraft maintenance as well as other specialized areas, celebrates its 60th anniversary this weekend.

The largest employer in the area,

Sheppard's permanent party military personnel total nearly 5,000, with a civilian workforce of more than 1,500, according to the latest community guide published by the Wichita Falls Board of Commerce & Industry. Add the 6,100 average student population to the mix and you've got a city within a city.

The BCI's publication, used in part to attract new businesses and residents to Wichita Falls, proclaims the annual economic impact of Sheppard Air Force Base on our community — a phenomenal \$637 million. Annually.

Nearly a third of the community's economic force can be linked to Sheppard, with payroll and benefits for active, retirees and reserves totaling more than \$450 million. Annually.

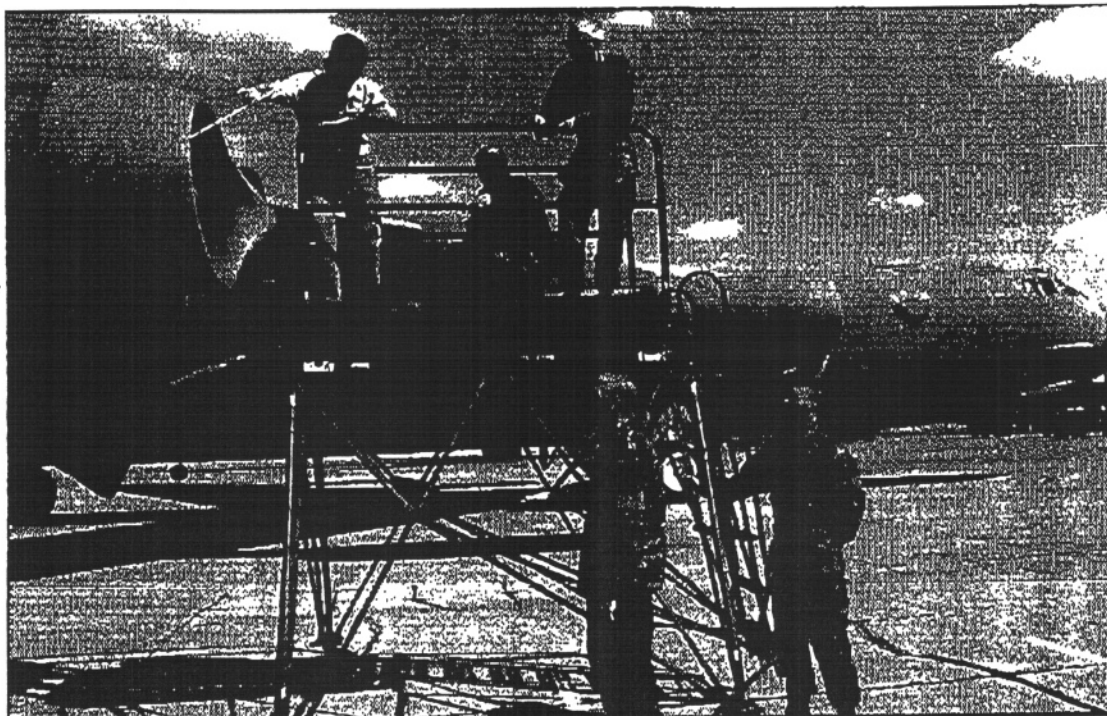
We should celebrate Sheppard's existence in and contribution to our community every year, every day. Reaching this milestone, 60 years as an unparalleled economic catalyst, deserves further recognition.

Deserted, practically.

Tumbleweeds, figuratively speaking.

A ghost town, that's what we'd have here without Sheppard Air Force Base.

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Harry Tonemah/Times Record News

Daniel Ottmann, master instructor, shows Airman Basics Robert Dobkowski, Christopher Larson, Jesse Kessler and Chris Davidson some of the finer points of a B-52 Bomber jet engine. Sheppard Air Force Base celebrates its 60th anniversary this weekend.

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Email: www.trnonline.com